1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

These rules of inheritance are followed very closely in practice, because everyone knows that any dispute over inheritance that cannot be settled amicably between the surviving relatives goes to court—and the court normally takes ten percent of the estate for its adjudication services in an inheritance dispute. When a man is called into the courts, and most Kanuri have been to court at some time in their lives, he must go with his agnates—his father, paternal grandfather, father's brothers, sons, father's brother's sons, and any other male he can muster who is related to him in the male line. This agnatically related group is legally responsible as a whole for the acts of each of its members unless a crime against the state has been committed. A Kanuri who is threatened immediately thinks of this group as the one that he can turn to for help. As we shall see later the group often lives close together so that the agnates are neighbors as well as a corporate group in the eyes of the law. They help one another in many day-to-day activities, perform ceremonies together, and often practice the same or closely related occupations.

Although there is an emphasis on a person's agnates, his kin relations through his mother are also quite important. People who have no matrilateral kin (those related to a person through the mother), or very few of them, are considered to be unfortunate because they lack that much warmth and affection in their lives. These kin, say the Kanuri, love you like a mother loves her child. You can feel at home with them in a way that is less conflict-ridden than any other kinship relation. People often said that if they had to borrow money it was better to go to mother's kin first before asking anyone related to them agnatically. There is always some tension over property among an agnatic descent group because it is the major one for purposes of inheritance, family wealth, and privileges. People say that if a man borrows from his father or his father's brothers, or his brothers, or his patrilateral cousin, he is trying to get his inheritance or that of his brothers before the proper time. Furthermore, the responsibility in court, and in the eyes of public opinion, of one agnate for another also increases the tensions in this group as compared to the matrilateral one. By contrast, however, a man with no agnates is not just unfortunate—he is a social outcast. He has no group to stand up for him as a result of his birth into society; he has no legal right to a father's inheritance, he is thought of as an outcast, he must rely solely on his wits, and he cannot easily be trusted.

A village area chief and his advisers declared that I should not hire a certain man and claimed that they were going to see to it that I certainly did not take him into my household. They told me that no one in the vicinity knew his brothers or his father, or his father's brothers, or indeed if he had any, or where they might be, and he would not volunteer any information on the subject. In their eyes he was not a responsible person, and if he did anything wrong there was no group they could call into account for it. Unless he could attach himself to a household, he simply had no means of achieving an accepted position in the community, and the village leaders did not like the idea of making me, a European stranger, responsible for this unknown man.[1] Obviously under such circumstances illegitimate

[1] This would mean that as his household head I must appear in court if and when he did something wrong. The local leaders did not believe they could require this responsibility from me, and were thus faced with the problem of allowing into their community a man for whom no one could vouch, yet giving him a paid place in one of its wealthiest households.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

children are abhorred and every effort is made to get the woman married should she be pregnant. Although her shame is great, it is nothing compared to the problems that the new individual will encounter unless people come to accept his mother's agnatic kin group as his—and whether that group will in fact accept him as a member. The pariah status of illegitimate children is easily seen in the widespread belief that they can only marry others like themselves or people of slave status.

So much then for the first two features of kinship, those of genealogy and descent. The third aspect, that of marriage relations, brings us much closer to what is commonly thought of as family life in western society. Using the anthropological jargon, we can sum up the kinds of relations invoked by a Kanuri marriage by saying that Kanuri marriage is polygynous with virilocal residence patterns which have a patrilocal emphasis and an exceptionally high divorce rate. In plain English this means that the men can marry more than one wife, up to four by Islamic law (they are polygynous); the wife invariably leaves her home to go and live with her husband in a place chosen by him (they are virilocal); and, this often but not always proves to be in the vicinity of, or even inside, the household of the husband's father (there is a tendency toward patrilocality). Finally, most Kanuri marriages, the vast majority of them certainly, end in divorce.

Because a marriage usually involves the creation of whole sets of kinship links where none existed before, the way in which such changes are brought about and made "official," or publically recognized, is an important aspect in the anthropological study of marriage. Furthermore, such activities are also very important moments in the lives of the individuals concerned, who must see to it that all that should be done is done correctly according to traditional custom. Thus we start looking at marriage by describing its inception.

In thinking about a marriage the first question that any Kanuri man asks himself is whether he can afford it or not. That is, can he and those people on whom he can count for financial aid take on the expense of a marriage ceremony and bridewealth payments; and, if he can, how high can he go?

A man who already has a wife or wives knows that he must give gifts, supposedly equal to those going to the bride, to wives already married to him. He knows that the pressures for expenditures for drummers, food, transportation of the bride to his dwelling, and many other aspects of the ceremony, will very likely involve more of an outlay than he can readily predict. Can the capital be raised for such an undertaking? Most men are helped by their friends, their kin, and their political and economic patrons if they have any. Kanuri recognize the outcome of marriage expenses in their oft-quoted saying, "A man who is not in debt over a wedding is a man who has no friends."

Bridewealth payments form the basic marriage expense, and they can vary in size and elaborateness depending upon the status of the two family groups who are joined through the marriage, the marital history of the girl, the previous relationship of the groom to the girl's family, the bargaining power of each party to the marriage arrangement, and the time of year during which the payments are to be made. Although other factors can enter in and pull the bridewealth up or down in individual cases, these are the most effective determinants of bridewealth.

The payments themselves can be divided into three general categories, plus a "rebate." First there are one or more small gifts given to the girl and her rela-

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429 economic subordinates more closely to the exercise of his power and authority. In cases where this is less of a consideration (e.g. in marriages between peasant households) then the sheer economic benefit of the marriage to the luwali becomes the primary determinant in the
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565 decision. Among peasants it is not considered desirable to marry with traditionally regarded low status persons (male or female speaking) such as drummers-entertainers, slaves, butchers, blacksmiths, tanners, petty brokers, or anyone whose birth is considered illegitimate.(conceived out
[848] of wedlock). This results in a certain amount of endogamy among these occupation groups excluding illegitimates who are pariahs in the eyes of all.

582 Kanuri marriages are governed by the following rules of incest.. Marriages with parents or their siblings, own full or half siblings are forbidden, and this rule carries over to compounds into which ego's parents have remarried where no real biological relationship with ego's parent's new spouse's children obtains. It is culturally prescribed that ego (a male) may not marry a matrilateral parallel cousin, although several upper class informants felt that this was a custom of the people and not a Muslim ordinance. No marriages of the latter variety were observed during the field research. It is considered wrong (i.e. shameful) to marry wives of consanguinal kin of any generation after they have divorced ego's kin member. No reason was given for this rule, but no exceptions to its practice were observed.

It is considered inappropriate for a man to marry a woman older than himself. But age is known in only a vague general way and most men claim they are married to women younger than themselves.

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589 During his adolescence and increasingly so as he grows older, a young man strikes up liaisons with divorced women who are looking for